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WARLANDS
DARK TIDE RISING

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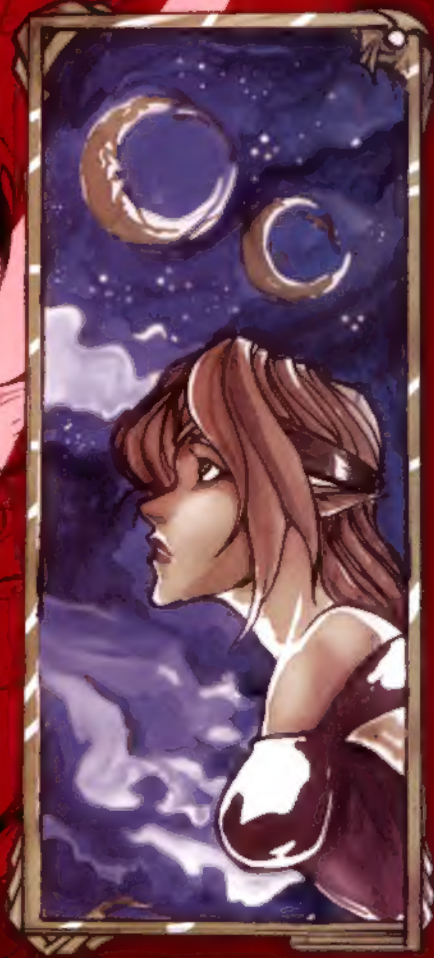

WarLands

VOLUME 3 DARK TIDE RISING

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DARK TIDE RISING
Chapter One: "POWERS AND PRINCIPALITIES"

.....HE WAS KIND OF GAZE AND GENTLE OF HAND, AND THE CHILDREN FLOCKED FOR THE LOVE HE SENT... ♪♫♪
MORNINGSTAR TAVERN
BUT DARKNESS HATED HIM AND SOUGHT HIS END...TO THIS FATE WAS THE SHADOW-SOUL BENT...RISING LIKE SMOKE FROM THE YELLOW SAND, THE DARK SPIRIT AWAITED THE DIRE MOMENT... ♪♫
THE SON OF LIGHT WAS NOT A COWARDLY MAN, HE KNEW THE DANGERS AND STILL BOLDLY HE WENT...OUT OF THE DAY AND INTO THE DARK, NIGHT-LAND. ♪♫
...KNOWING WITHOUT GRIEVING THAT HIS LIFE WAS ALL BUT SPENT... ♪♫♫
"Luzien knew he was destined to doom, he waited his fate without dread or gloom. He faced down the monster with love in his mien..." ♪♫

"For love was his life and light was his ken... and his soul would move on to Tania's bright land..." ♪♫♪♫♪
"The dark did not win, the shadow-soul claimed no victory. ♪♫♪♫♪
The son returned to the light of lights... the source from whence he came..." ♪
"The darkness fled before this bright power, killing the son, but not taking the hour. ♫♪♫
The shadow was driven into Warlands' deep heart, to haunt all our dreams with its dire art. ♪♫♪♫
"It seeded conflict and reaped deadly war, feeding on the harvest of murder and horror... our world was made darker and the shadow stains us still" ♪♫♪♫♪♫♪♫♪♫♪
"Hungry for our souls, it rends the ground with blood-stained claw, never to have its unholy fill." ♪♫

REMEMBER, THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH BELONGS TO THE LIGHT. LUCIEN HIMSELF WILL ONE DAY PUSH BACK THE NIGHT...AND PEACE WILL BLOOM LIKE BLOSSOMS BRIGHT...
THANK YOU ALL...
clap clap clap clap clap
I TOLD YOU WE'D FIND THE STORY HERE, BAGGOT. THAT SINGER KNOWS OF THE LOST PROPHECY!
SHE KNOWS A TERR'BLE DITTY ABOUT A FAIRY TALE, YE! MEAN, GIRL. SHADOW-SOULS AND SONS OF LIGHT-PHAUGH!
IT'S TRUE! I'VE TRACED THE STORY IN TOO MANY PARTS OF THIS WORLD FOR IT TO BE MERE FANCY. THERE WAS A SON OF LIGHT...AND SOMETHING CAUSES THE CONSTANT CONFLICT THAT HAUNTS OUR WORLD THROUGH THE CENTURIES!
'TIS A ROTTEN WORLD, LAINA, FILLED TO OVERFLOWING WITH ROTTEN PEOPLE--THAT'S NO LOST SECRET.
YOU PHILOSOPHIZERS LOOK TOO HARD FOR MEANING.
CLANG!
OH! SHE'S LEAVING--COME ON, WE HAVE TO CATCH UP TO HER!
ACH! WATCH YOUR GRIP, ELF-GIRL!

WHERE--?!
LET GO A ME!
THERE THEY GO! COME ON!
HMM, P'RAPS WE OUGHT TO THINK 'BOUT THIS, GIRL... THIS NEIGHBORHOOD LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE!
NONSENSE, NOTHING BAD EVER HAPPENS IN CASTELLAINE...
TELL THEM.
DAMN-- REAPERS... HERE?!

THE BLACK BASTIDS IS EVERYWHERE, GIRL--THEY'RE LIKE ROACHES!
FIT ONLY FR SQUASHING!!
LEAVE THOSE PEOPLE ALONE, KILLERS!
LIKE THIS!!
THUMMPH
BRING IT, YA' HOODED HOO-DOOS!
SHANINGGGG
GOD'S THESE PAJAMA-BOYOS ARE FUN!
UNH! THEY'RE SO DAMN SILENT-- EVEN IN DEATH--IT'S UNNERVING!
KRRNNG

THEY'RE MUTE BY CHOICE Y'KNOW. THEY CUT OUT THEIR TONGUES DURING INITIATION.
S'NOT ALL THEY CUT OFF, YOU ASK ME! PITCH 'EM TO ME, GIRL...!

...I'LL BREAK HIS FALL —OOPS!
LOOK OUT LAINA--ONE MORE ON HIS WAY!
SWAAAASH!

NO, IT SEEMS MUSIC HAS SOOTHED HIS SAVAGE BREAST.
SHA-TWANNNG

NICELY DONE...TOO BAD ABOUT THE LUTE, THOUGH...
NO ONE WILL MISS ONE LUTE. WHY WERE THE SNAKES AFTER YE?

PERHAPS THEIR KIND WANTS THE WORLD TO FORGET LUZIEN...?
HE IS REAL, THEN--? NOT JUST A LEGEND?

HE IS INDEED, OR WAS, I SHOULD SAY--LIKE THE SONG SAID, HE WAS KILLED A MILLENNIA AGO. THE LIGHT LIVES ON, THOUGH--AND LUCIEN IS THE KEY TO OUR WORLD'S TROUBLES.
THE PROPHECY, YES ...AND I FEEL CALLED TO PLAY SOME PART...
...THOUGH BY WHOM AND TO WHAT...I CANNOT SAY...
THE LIGHT LEADS US ALL, LAINA FOLLOW IT TO LUCIEN--SEEK THE HIGHEST SPOT ON THE WORLD FOR HIS TOMB... AND THE ANSWERS WE ALL SEEK.
BUT... HOW DO YOU...?
SEEK, LAINA.. AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED...
HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT...?
REAPERS! ARE YOU FOLKS ALL RIGHT?
WE'RE FINE, WE WERE HELPING-HEY, WHERE--?!
WERE THEY EVEN HERE--?!
OH, THEY WERE HERE...
...BUT WHERE DID THEY GO?

The Island of Kardis, home to two continuously clashing peoples of differing faiths.
Correction; the FORMER home of those two cultures. Thousands of years of fiercely held ideals made SUDDENLY moot by their mutual EXTINCTION.
The broken bodies of the rival forces, lie alongside the equally shattered idols of their gods. There are no winners...

BALEN, DO WE HAVE TO BE OUT HERE?
INDEED WE DO, KYRA MY DEAR. I HAVE SOME BUSINESS TO CONCLUDE.
TSK. SO MUCH CARNAGE. SUCH A WASTE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN WELL PAID FOR SELLING WEAPONS.. TO BOTH SIDES.
YES. .WELL, YOU KNOW I NEVER TAKE SIDES. THERE'S SO MUCH MORE PROFIT WHEN YOU CATER TO EVERYONES BLOODTHIRST. BUT I SEE NO REASON NOT TO TAKE A BONUS AS WELL.
AH, THANK YOU, SIR COBRA.. ..PROFESSIONAL COURTESY, I PRESUME.

POOR KING GAON, THINGS CERTAINLY WENT BADLY FOR EVERYONE. WHO COULD HAVE FORESEEN THAT..? OTHER THAN I, THAT IS..?
AND I DID INDEED SEE THIS FUTILE EVENTUALITY, BELIEVE ME. I IMAGINE THAT I COULD HAVE WARNED YOU, OR YOUR RIVAL LYCON.
..BUT WHO BUYS WEAPONS AND INTELLIGENCE FROM A MAN WHO TELLS THEM NOT TO FIGHT?
BALEN SARGOS NEVER PLAYS FAVORITES.
IT'S NOT GOOD BUSINESS.
BALEN, IF YOUR DREAMS TELL YOU THE FUTURE, WHY DO YOU NOT SET YOUR SIGHTS ON GREATER REWARD?
WITH THAT KNOWLEDGE--AND YOUR OTHER, ABUNDANT GIFTS--YOU COULD MAKE YOURSELF KING!
A KING??! ME??!
BITE YOUR TONGUE GIRL!

I TREASURE MY FREEDOM FAR TOO MUCH TO EVER SEEK POWER. I'LL JUST GO ON PLAYING BOTH SIDES AGAINST THE MIDDLE AND REAPING THE PROFITS.
NO-O-O-O, NOT FOR ME THE WEIGHT OF A CROWN AND THE HEAVIER BURDEN OF ALL THE ROYAL PAIN THAT GOES WITH IT. NO KING EVER RULES, WHO ISN'T RULED IN TURN BY HIS MEWLING SUBJECTS AND SCHEMING COURT
BESIDES, I HAVEN'T A STOMACH FOR WAR AND DEATH--AND ON THIS CURSED WORLD, ALL KINGS MUST EVENTUALLY LEAD THEIR PEOPLE TO DOOM.
I AM NO KILLER
BESIDES, EVERYTHING I DO, ALL THE RICHES I AMASS, I OWE TO THE DREAMS THAT REVEAL CONFLICTS TO COME. IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL, I NEED TO DREAM.
THEY TELL ME KINGS SELDOM SLEEP, LET ALONE DREAM.
NO THIS IS THE LIFE FOR ME.

Somewhere in Yattanhia [illegible] unfolds.

He is Zadok Shaw, warrior and priest of the Unknown Light... and, not incidentally, sworn foe of all things ARCANE and FOUL.

SSSSSHH

VAMPIRES for

AYE, FREYA... THE DAMNED BESTIAL BLOODSUCKERS ARE RELENTLESS. NOTHING LIKE THE COURTLY VAMPIRES OF YORE.

SNNNRRRRRLLLL

CHUK-K-K

BUT I AIM TO SEND THESE MONSTERS TO THE SAME HELL AS THEIR FOPPISH FOREBEARS! YAAAAAH!

UNNNN--!
THUDDD
YARRRGGGHHH!
KRRRSSSH
DAMN THIS COLD WINTER COMES EARLY THIS YEAR I CAN BARELY GRASP MY SWORD
BUT WHAT CHOICE HAVE I?!
SKKLUUURCHH!

UFF--!
UNNNGGG--?!
ARRRHHH!
RAAAAHHHH!!

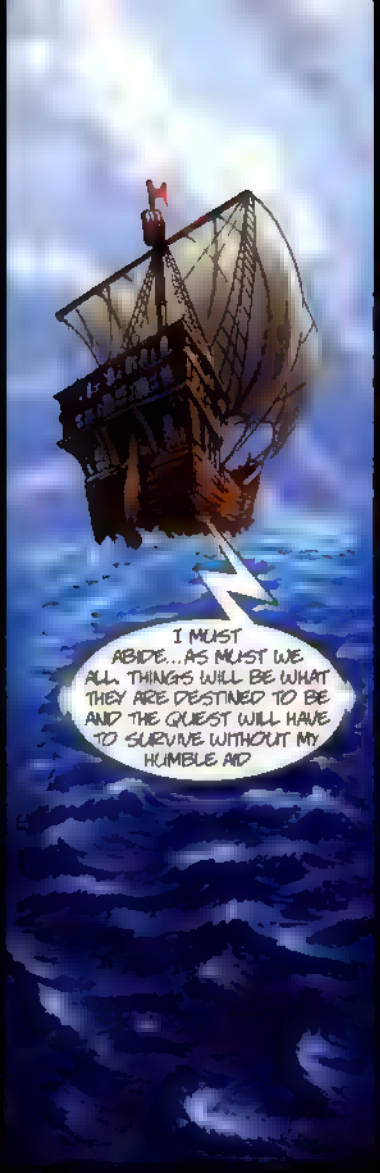
YAAA-HAA-HAA-HA-HA!
HUNNNNH!
rHOOSH!
BY GREAT TANIA'S RADIANCE--?!

IT APPEARS WE HAVE AN UNSUSPECTED ALLY, GIRL...
HELLO--?!
THOOSH
THOOSH
COME OUT ARCHER--I WOULD THANK YOU FOR SAVING MY LIFE!
THOOP!
THOOP!
THOOP!
SPLOOSH!
ALL RIGHT, NOW THAT THEY'RE ALL DEAD I WILL SHOW MYSELF.

NO NEED FOR THANKS, FRIEND--ALL IN A DAY'S WORK!
YOU HAVE MY GRATITUDE ALL THE SAME--EXCELLENT SHOOTING, BOY.
I AM CALLED ZADOK, I AM A PRIEST OF THE UNKNOWN LIGHT. THIS IS FREYA, SHE SEEMS TO APPROVE OF YOU.
I APPROVE OF FREYA TOO--I AM PELONIS, AND I KNOW WHO YOU ARE...I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR YOU, GOOD SIR
OH ..?
JUST SO. I HAVE HEARD OF ZADOK, THE SCOURGE OF THE DEMONIC, SINCE I WAS A BOY--A MUCH SMALLER BOY THAT IS.
clap!
I HAVE TRAINED AND STUDIED JUST TO FOLLOW YOU, SIR. I WOULD FIGHT MONSTERS AT YOUR SIDE--IF YOU'LL HAVE ME.
HELLO, APOLLO GOOD BOY. SO, MAY I JOIN YOU?
THIS LIFE IS NO LARK, BOY--NO GAME FOR STRIPLINGS. WITH THE VAMPIRES BACK AND MUTATED, MY AVOCATION IS MORE PERILOUS THAN EVER!
BUT YOU ARE GOOD WITH THAT CROSSBOW.. AND IT HAPPENS I AM ON MY WAY TO JOIN A QUEST..

YOU'RE WELCOME TO FOLLOW--THOUGH WE'LL ALL LIKELY WIND UP DEAD.
WOW, EVERY BIT THE SUNBEAM THE LEGENDS SAY--BUT THANK YOU SIR.
WHAT THEN OF THIS QUEST-IS THERE A PRINCESS IN NEED OF SAVING? A LOST TREASURE?
GET YOUR HEAD OUT OF THE FAIRY TALES, BOY-THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE FUN!
NOT FOR YOU, I AM SURE. BUT TELL ME OF THE CAUSE. PLEASE.
..I AM NOT SURE, ACTUALLY. IT CAME TO ME IN A DREAM. I AM TO SEEK AND SERVE A YOUNG FEMALE ELF WHO QUESTS AFTER THE DIVINE LIGHT ITSELF.
THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME! LET'S GO!
YES... LET US RUSH TO OUR DOOMS.

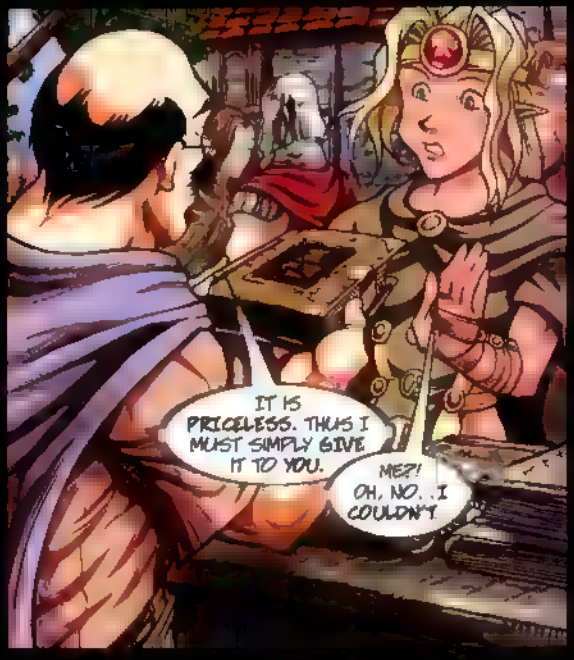
The Aslan Sea, off the eastern coast of the Myrish Kingdoms.
An unexpected wind fills hungry sails.
He is called Zeph. Someday he will be the ARCHMAGE- but even now his power is great.
Though he appears as only a boy, his blindfold is a control, lest he go mad from the unstoppable influx of higher perception...
WINTER IS IN THE AIR, AND IT IS STILL ONLY THE TENTH MONTH. THE WORLD CHANGES FOR THE ILL..
OH... THERE IS SO MUCH I CAN'T EVEN GUESS AT. BUT THINGS WILL GET SO MUCH WORSE..AND SOON.
THERE WILL BE A GREAT QUEST, BUT MY PATH LIES ELSEWHERE.


I MUST ABIDE...AS MUST WE ALL. THINGS WILL BE WHAT THEY ARE DESTINED TO BE AND THE QUEST WILL HAVE TO SURVIVE WITHOUT MY HUMBLE AID

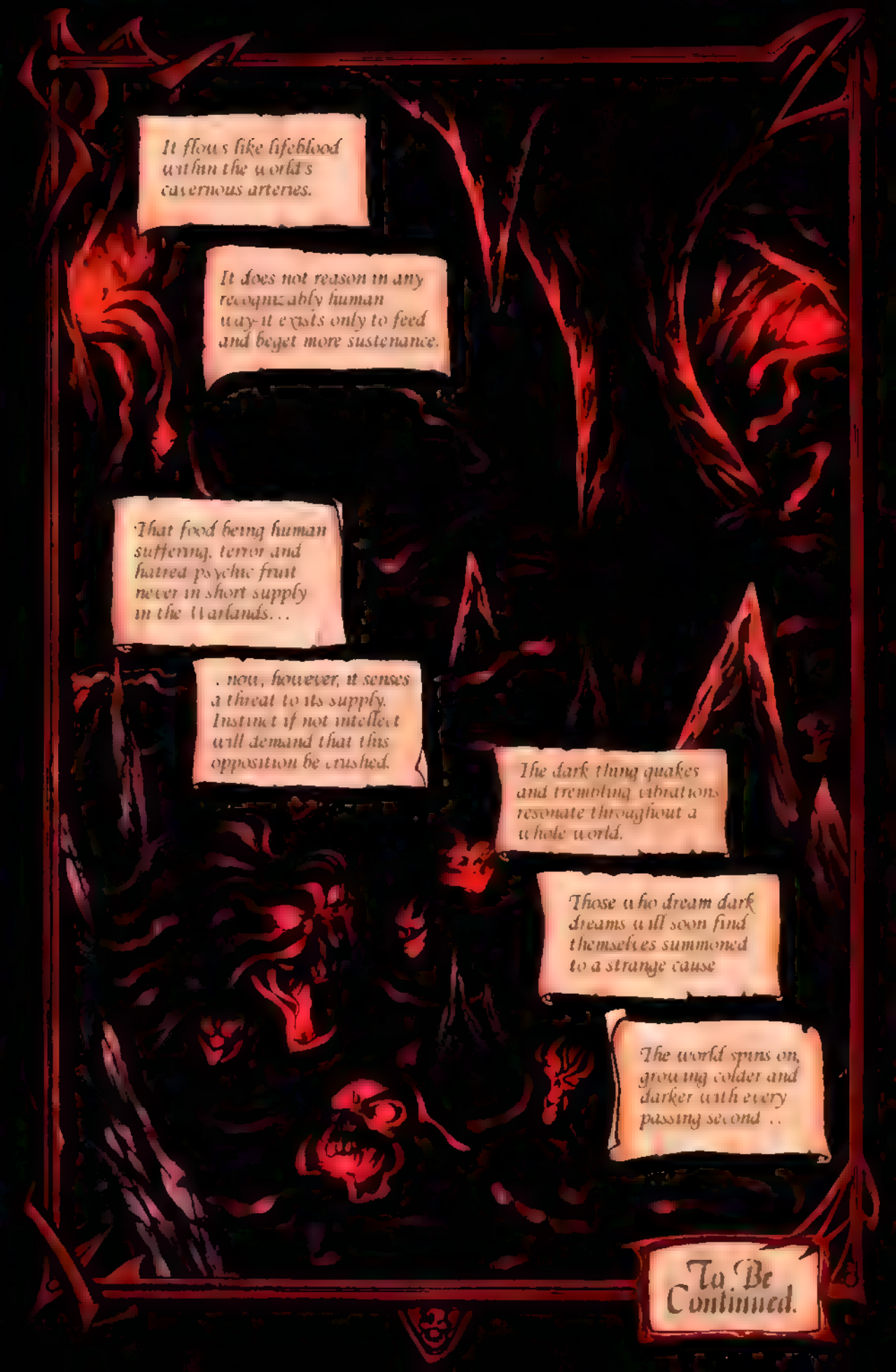
Castellaine. The Great Market.

THE BEST BEER
HAVE YOU GHERNACCI'S "THE LIGHTBEARER?"
IF ANYONE WOULD . BUT ALAS NO--I AM NOT CONVINCED THAT THE BOOK TRULY EXISTS.

HOWEVER. I DO HAVE THE ONLY KNOWN COPY OF "THE SECRET SHADOW."
OH.
I HAD NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE THAT LEGENDARY WORK. IT MUST BE WORTH A FORTUNE.


IT IS PRICELESS. THUS I MUST SIMPLY GIVE IT TO YOU.
ME?! OH, NO. . I COULDN'T

I INSIST, MY DEAR. YOU ARE GOING ON A TRIP--YOU MUST TAKE EVERYTHING YOU MIGHT NEED
TAKE THE BOOK FOR THAT REASON...IT MAY BE YOU'LL BE IN NEED OF THE KNOWLEDGE WITHIN...?
YES...I BELIEVE IT...THOUGH I'D MUCH RATHER REMAIN IGNORANT OF SUCH THINGS..
BRRRR--
BUT OUR CARDS ARE ALREADY DEALT, ALL WE CAN DO IS PLAY THEM. THANK YOU, KIND SIR.
TRAVELING MERCIES, DEAR GIRL...BE IN THE LIGHT.
WILL WE NEED THAT MUCH ALCOHOL...?
WE MUST TAKE EVERYTHING WE MIGHT NEED--AND WE MIGHT NEED MEDICINE.
WHAT'S NEXT ?
WE MUST BOOK PASSAGE ON A SHIP BOUND FOR CERANZA...THAT IS WHERE WE WILL FIND THOSE WHO SEEK US.


It flows like lifeblood within the world's cavernous arteries.
It does not reason in any recognizably human way-it exists only to feed and beget more sustenance.
That food being human suffering, terror and hatred psychic fruit never in short supply in the Warlands...
. now, however, it senses a threat to its supply. Instinct if not intellect will demand that this opposition be crushed.
The dark thing quakes and trembling vibrations resonate throughout a whole world.
Those who dream dark dreams will soon find themselves summoned to a strange cause
The world spins on, growing colder and darker with every passing second ..
To Be Continued.

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WARLANDS™

DARK TIDE RISING

BOOK 2

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Somewhere in the far north of the world known as TERRENDS
Remote though it is word of global troubles have reached even these icy peaks
A dark SHADOW hangs over the world wrapping around it with supernatural tendrils
It nurtures and seeds conflict and fear and crushes any budding peace before it can spread
In spite of this an opposing force gathers This evil taint will be routed
DARK TIDE RISING
CHAPTER TWO: "THE GATHERING"

. MUST FIND THESE GOOD FOLKS, IONA— ONLY YOU CAN GET THROUGH.
I WILL, GRANDFATHER. TELL ME WHERE.
THEY WILL BE IN NEW CERANZA WITHIN WEEKS. TELL THEM I SENT YOU. THE NAME OF CRAEDON MAY STILL CARRY SOME WEIGHT IN THE WORLD.
WHATEVER HAPPENS, THEY MUST BE FOUND. THIS WILL BE IMPORTANT TO THEM, THOUGH EVEN I AM NOT SURE HOW.
I RECEIVED THE WORDS IN A MYSTIC TRANCE...ALONG WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CAUSE.
THERE WILL BE TROUBLE..?
WILL SOMEONE ATTEMPT TO IMPEDE ME?
MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT THAT, DEAR IONA. YOU MUST BE ON YOUR GUARD!
THE DARK POWER THAT RULES THIS WORLD WILL NOT BROOK REBELLION CALMLY. ITS EXISTENCE IS UNDER SIEGE--IT WILL STRIKE BACK AT ANY WHO ASSIST THIS CAUSE!

YOU ARE RISKING EVERYTHING. BUT WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE? THE WORLD MUST FINALLY BE FREE!
ON SECOND THOUGHT, MY DEAR, I PITY THE ONE WHO CROSSES YOUR PATH WITH ILL INTENT.
'TIS A FORTUITOUS THING THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN AFTER YOUR FATHER'S SIDE, THAN MINE. THE STATURE AND MIGHT OF THE LEGENDARY FROST GIANTS WILL SERVE YOU WELL IN THIS QUEST.
CARRY MY LOVE IN YOUR HEART, DEAR IONA. KNOW THAT I COULD NOT BE MORE PROUD.
GO WITH THE LIGHT AND SERVE YOUR WORLD WELL.
GRANDFATHER, IT'S NOT AS IF WE WILL NEVER SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN!
WE MAY NOT. SUCH IS THE IMPORT OF THIS MISSION. WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU MUST GET THROUGH TO THE REBELS.
WHATEVER HAPPENS.
YES, GRANDFATHER.
I LOVE YOU, GRANDFATHER.
THEN--OOF! --DON'T CRUSH AN OLD MAN, DEAREST --GO AND DO WELL.
MAY THE GODS LIGHT YOUR WAY.

THE WORLD IS IN GOOD, STRONG HANDS.
WHAT'S THIS. ? I SENSE I AM NOT.. ALONE
I EXPECTED THIS...BUT YOU ARE TOO LATE. ALREADY IONA HEADS SOUTH WITH THE INFORMATION I GAVE HER-- THE KEY TO YOUR UNDOING!
BUT WHY DO I WASTE BREATH? YOU DO NOT SPEAK, OR FEEL OR EVEN THINK AS WE DO
WHOOOOOM
YOU ARE NOTHING MORE THAN SHEER MALEVOLENT HATEFUL POWER LOOSED UPON THIS POOR WORLD!
DO WHAT YOU WILL TO ME, BUT YOU WILL BE DESTROYED!!

GRANDFATHER!
WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU MUST GET THROUGH.
YOU WILL BE AVENGED!
NOTHING WILL STOP ME!
DAMN.
AAAAHRRRR!

NOT EVEN A MILE FROM THE RUINS OF GRANDFATHER'S HOUSE--YOUR MASTER WASTES NO TIME! BUT YOU BEASTS DO! I WILL NOT BE DETERRED BY YOU!
AHROOOOOOOO!
UNFFFF--!

SCHUUUFFFFF
GRRRRRRRR
COME CLOSER, DOGGY

YAAAARRR!
DIE, DEMON!
UFFF...!
FOR YOU, GRANDFATHER!
FOR OUR WORLD!!

SO WE'RE HERE IN NEW CERANZA. WE'VE BEEN IN NEW CERANZA FOR THREE DAYS. TELL ME, LAINA, WHEN ARE WE GOING TO DO SOMETHING?
I WISH I KNEW, BAGGOT. I WISH I KNEW

I SEEK THE FINAL FATE OF THE LONG-DEAD SAGE, LUZIEN--IN HOPE THAT THERE IS AN ANSWER TO THE DARKNESS THAT PLAGUES THIS REALM.
I FEEL CALLED TO BE HERE. BUT I DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS NEXT

THIS BOOK SPEAKS OF THE SHADOW SOUL OF WARLANDS--THE EVIL FORCE THAT CORRUPTS AND TERRORIZES OUR WORLD
BUT IT SAYS NOTHING ABOUT WHERE WE WOULD FIND THE REMEDY WE SEEK.

ALL WE CAN DO, I THINK, IS WAIT TO BE FOUND OURSELVES.
I HOPE WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR LONG.

I JUST HOPE I'M NOT WASTING EVERYONE'S TIME.
NOW'S A FINE TIME T'WORRY ABOUT IT... AND IT'S NOT MY TIME I WORRY YOU'LL BE WASTIN'
NO, I MEAN. ALL OF THIS IS SO.. UNPROVABLE ..LIKE CHASING SMOKE.
. I'M SETTING OFF TO BATTLE SOMETHING NO ONE EVEN SUSPECTS IS REAL...
YOU SAY THERE'S AN EVIL FORCE AT WORK IN THE WORLD, I SAY LET'S GET 'EM!
THAT'S CALLED FAITH. I DON'T KNOW IF I BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU SAY.
..BUT I DO BELIEVE IN YOU.
YES, ESPECIALLY BEFORE IT GETS US!
EVERYTHING ALRIGHT HERE?
SURE, NOTHING LIKE A DESPERATE ATTACK TO MAKE YOU FEEL ON TRACK!

KYRA! THANK THE GODS— YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
OF COURSE I AM BALEN, WHAT IS IT?
ONE OF MY PROPHETIC DREAMS, BUT THIS ONE WAS DIFFERENT.
NORMALLY I DREAM OF COMING CONFLICT IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THIS BLIGHTED WORLD.
...BUT THIS TIME, THE TARGET OF ATTACK WAS ME! THEY'RE GOING TO KILL US!!
WHO IS?
I DON'T.. KNOW. SOMEONE OUT THERE IS RAISING AN ARMY TO COME AND GET... ME?!
IF THAT'S TRUE, THIS WAS A WARNING. YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF!
HOW?!
WHERE AM I GOING TO GET AN ARMY TO DEFEND ME?!

HAIL SARGOS!!

The Dawn Treader, several days out of New Ceranza
. . .TELL ME, ZADOK, HOW DID YOU DEFEAT THE DEMONS OF ALDERTON CASTLE?
THE ONLY WAY ONE CAN DEFEAT DEMONS, I PRAYED OVER THEM.
WHAT, NO SWORDPLAY?! A FAMED WARRIOR SUCH AS YOURSELF--?!
I AM ALSO A PRIEST OF THE UNKNOWN LIGHT, PELONIS. PRAYER IS MY MOST POWERFUL WEAPON.
OKAY... WHEN YOU PRAYED, DID THEY EXPLODE?!
I LIKED YOU BETTER WHEN YOU WERE SEASICK.
PELONIS!
I SEE 'EM... DRAGONS!

GOOD. NOTHING MORE BORING THAN A QUIET CRUISE!
YES, THIS WAS ARRANGED JUST FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT
SHRREEEEEEEEEE
GREAT! DID WE PAY EXTRA FOR THIS?
BECAUSE I WOULD!
SHRIPP
PAY ATTENTION BOY, OR THIS WILL COST YOU MORE THAN COIN!
YAASH!

REEEEEEEEEE!
GOT YOU--!
SNAAARR!!
YA-HOOOOO--!
>SIGH<
CHUK-K-K

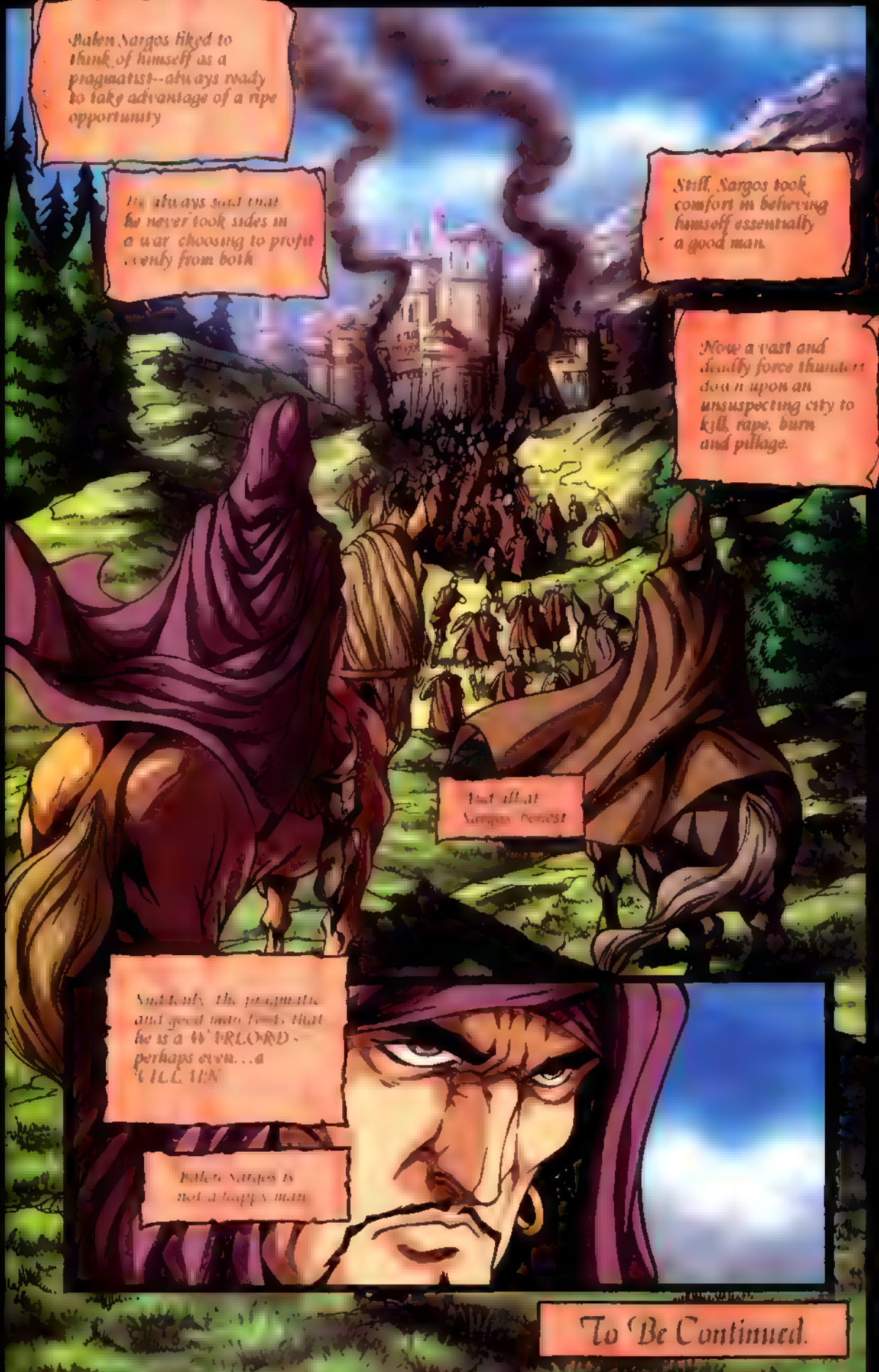
SSSSSSSHH
THIS IS NOT FUN AND GAMES, PELONIS.
ARRRRROOOOO!

THAT'S IT? THEY'RE JUST LEAVING?
THIS WAS POINTLESS!
ON THE CONTRARY, THIS WAS VERY HELPFUL.
WHAT?
WE MUST BE ON THE CORRECT PATH. THE DARK FORCES DO NOT GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO ATTACK THE HARMLESS.

THAT'S THE DAWN TREADER, I'NNIT? WAS THERE A FLASHY WARRIOR TYPE ABOARD--?
LOOK OUT, SMALL FRY!
HOW WILL WE KNOW THIS CHAMPION, LAINA--?
I WISH THE DREAM WERE THAT SPECIFIC I REALLY DON'T KNOW
I ASSUME WE'LL JUST KNOW WHEN WE SEE HIM.

AH, SO IT'S TRUE. THE SHIP WAS SET UPON BY DRAGONS. SURELY A GREAT HERO MUST'VE DONE THESE IN.
AYE, AND I'D BE THAT HERO, MISS.
...YOU?!
YOU'RE THE CHAMPION I'M TO EXPECT?
NONE OTHER, MILADY.
YOU ARE?! THEN I HAVE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME TO MEET..
I AM THAT LADY. MY NAME IS LAINA. THIS IS BAGGOT. I AM CERTAINLY HAPPY TO FINALLY MEET YOU-- AND YOUR YOUNG FRIEND.
WELL, PERHAPS ONE OTHER.
MY NAME IS ZADOK. THIS WHELP IS PELONIS. IF YOU'RE THE LADY I AM TO EXPECT, WE HAVE A QUEST AHEAD OF US.

THEY'RE READY, SARGOS.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GIVE THE WORD..
UM..?
YES. YOU DECIDED THAT IF WE'RE TO DEFEAT THOSE WHO WANT YOU DEAD, YOU'LL NEED TO FUND YOUR ARMY.
THAT'S WHERE THE TOWN OF KHARALIS COMES IN. THEY'RE VERY WEALTHY
YES. I DO REMEMBER.
GIVE THEM THE WORD, THEN
. MY ARMY CAN'T WAIT TO GO DOWN AND TAKE WHAT WE NEED. >SIGH<



Balen Sargos liked to think of himself as a pragmatist--always ready to take advantage of a ripe opportunity

He always said that he never took sides in a war choosing to profit evenly from both

Still, Sargos took comfort in believing himself essentially a good man.

Now a vast and deadly force thunders down upon an unsuspecting city to kill, rape, burn and pillage.

And all at Sargos' behest

Suddenly, the pragmatic and good man finds that he is a WARLORD - perhaps even...a VILLAIN

Balen Sargos is not a happy man

To Be Continued.

WARLANDS

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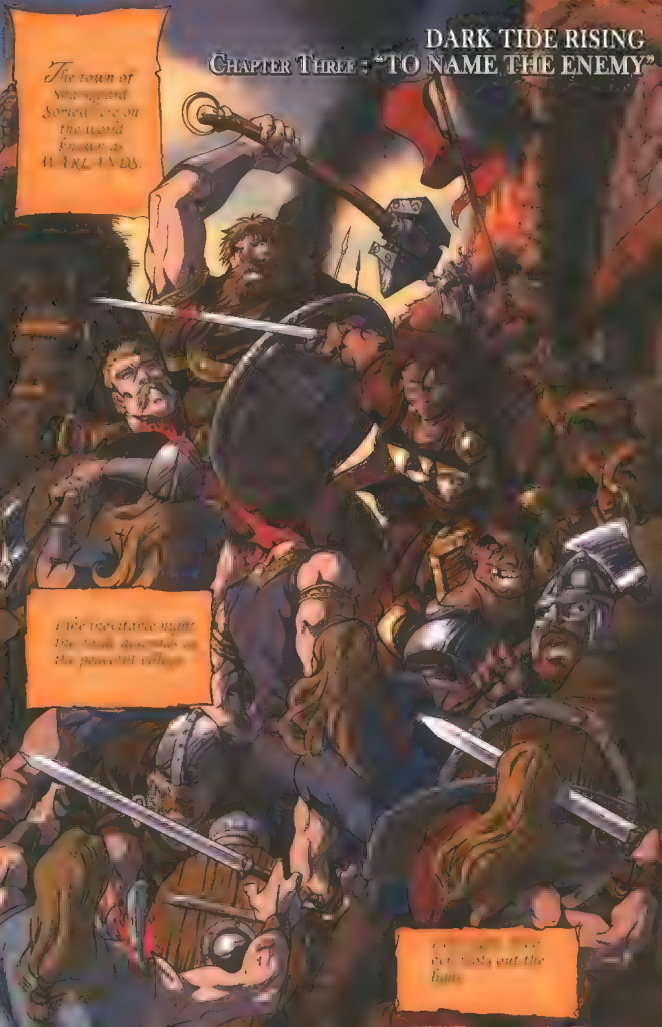
DARK TIDE RISING
CHAPTER THREE : "TO NAME THE ENEMY"
The town of
the world

JUST THINK. ALL OF THIS IS BEING DONE FOR YOU! IT'S AS IF YOU WERE A KING OR SOMETHING.
YES, KYRA. LONG LIVE KING BALEN SARGOS THE MAGNIFICENT!
SARGOS THE HAUNTED, IS MORE LIKE IT.

YOU ACT AS IF THIS WERE A CURSE. YOU'VE GOTTEN PROPHETIC DREAMS FOR YEARS AND ALWAYS PROFITED HANDSOMELY FROM THEM
NOW THE DREAMS OFFER YOU THE GREATEST PROFIT OF ALL -- YOUR LIFE!
THERE ARE FORCES ALIGNING AGAINST YOU, BUT YOU HAVE AN EDGE, BALEN! YOU KNOW THEY'RE COMING!
YES, AND SUDDENLY I HAVE AN ARMY OF BRUTES TO FIGHT MY CAUSE. WHY?
BECAUSE YOU ARE BLESSED BY THE GODS! THEY GIFT YOU WITH PROPHECY AND WHEN YOU ARE THREATENED, WITH AN ARMY!
WHAT IS EVEN REMOTELY GODLY ABOUT THIS PACK OF JACKALS?
YOUR JACKALS ARE A MEANS TO AN END, BALEN. A MEANS TO YOUR DESTINY!
CLEARLY, THE GODS INTEND YOU TO BE A GREAT RULER!
AND YOU SAID I WASN'T CURSED--?

YOU ARE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT THIS HORROR!
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO KILLED MY FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS!
YOU--!
UNNNN-
I DIDN'T WILL THIS -- THESE ARE THE WAGES OF WAR.
THE WORDS OF A TRUE POLITICIAN. YOU SPEAK OF NUMBERS. I SPEAK OF HUMAN LIVES!
NO!
LIAR!!! YOU KILLED MY PEOPLE!!

-AAAAAH--!
WELL STRUCK, MILORD. VERY NICE.
IT WAS... IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN SURVIVAL.
ISN'T SURVIVAL WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT, DEAR BALEN? HELL, ISN'T THAT WHAT LIFE ITSELF IS ABOUT?
IT SEEMS SO FUTILE. WHAT WAS THE POINT OF ANY OF THIS?
LORD SARGOS? WE LOCATED THE TOWN TREASURY.
THERE'S YOUR POINT, BALEN. YOU'VE AN ARMY TO FEED. A KINGDOM TO BUILD.

SEE TO IT THAT ALL THE MEN GET THEIR SHARES, AND STOW THE REST. THEN SET UP CAMP.
OF COURSE, SIR. THANK YOU.
SIGURD'S EYES! SKARSGAARD IS LAID WASTE?!

IT'S GETTING COLDER. WINTER SEEMS TO BE COMING EARLY.
IS IT OUR ADVERSARY?
IT'S NOTHING NATURAL, LAINA. THE WHOLE WORLD GROWS COLDER WELL BEFORE IT'S TIME.
I THINK NOT. THE SHADOW-SOUL HAS NO CARE FOR WEATHER.
NO. THIS IS OTHER SORCERY. ONE WORKING WITH INFINITELY PATIENT AND INEXORABLE.
UNCHECKED, SUCH WORLD WAY WELL FACE ANOTHER ICE AGE IN MERE DECADES.
IF YOU'RE CHILLY, LADY LAINA, I AM JUST THE FELLOW TO WARM YOU.
AH, ZULUS! COOL OFF PELONIS.
GET STUPPED, TROLL!
I'M A GNOME, FOOL!
AWWW. HE STARTED IT.
BAGGOT! PELONIS! STOP THIS NONSENSE NOW!

HOW LONG HAS BAGGOT BEEN IN LOVE WITH YOU?
WHAT? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. BAGGOT WAS MY PARENTS' FRIEND--HE'S PRACTICALLY MY UNCLE!
ALL THE SAME, YOUR "UNCLE" NURSES A POORLY-DISGUISED PASSION FOR YOU. PROBABLY HAS FOR YEARS.
AND PELONIS?
PELONIS IS 22 AND INFATUATED WITH DANGER, HIS HORSE AND YOU--IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER.
AS A PRIEST, I MAY BE CELEBATE, BUT I'M NOT BLIND. NONE OF YOU CAN HIDE YOUR FEELINGS.
ME? I HAVE NO FEEL.
WAIT.
SOMETHING'S OUT THERE!
GRRRRRRRR!!!

TARA'S BLACK HEART! SATYRS?!!

THIS IS THE SHADOW-SOUL'S SORCERY WITHOUT QUESTION!
NONE AT ALL--THESE STUPID BEASTS HAVE BEEN AIMED AT US!
DON'T PLAY WITH 'EM--THEY'RE JUST ANIMALS! LETHAL ANIMALS!
YAHHHH! GET THEM OFF!!
THEY'RE IN A BLOOD FRENZY!
UGH... DAMNED THINGS DON'T CARE WHOSE BLOOD THEY FEAST ON!
SHRIIPP

YOU TWERPS SHOULD STICK TO BUNNIES AND SQUIRRELS--HUMANS ARE WAY OVER YOUR HEAD! HEH. OVER YOUR HEAD
THIS IS JUST A DISTRACTION. THE DARK SOUL IS JUST TOYING WITH US!
FEEL SO... OOO
LOOK OUT!!
LAINA...?

CHOMMM
BLASTED BUTT-MUNCH!! THAT HURT!!

AIEEEEE!!
FAGGOT! YOUR ARM
-NOTHING!
FAGGOT?
LET HIM BE, GIRL. IT'S MORE HIS PRIDE WOUNDED TODAY.
WHAT'S GOT INTO HIM...?
I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU.

THINK OF IT, KYRA. WE HAVE A HUGE RETINUE JUST TO MOVE THIS RIDICULOUS THING AROUND. IT'S LIKE A MOBILE MANSION
GET USED TO IT. THIS IS HOW KINGS LIVE!
(SIGH)
LISTEN TO THESE ANIMALS
OH LET THEM BE-THE VICTORS ARE ENTITLED TO THE SPOILS
THEY'RE YOUR LOYAL SUBJECTS, YOU WANT THEM TO ENJOY THEIR REWARDS!

FAR BE IT FROM ME TO STAND IN THE WAY OF TRADITION!
YOU KNOW, I WONDER IF I REALLY AM AT RISK. I HAVEN'T HAD A DREAM IN WEEKS. AND WITH ALL THESE BODYGUARDS, NO ONE CAN EVEN GET CLOSE TO ME.
N-NO PLEASE ?
NO-O-O-O-O-O
HELP!!

SHAPOW
YAAARRRRRR?!
SHEESH, SHE'S A TALL ONE, AIN'T SHE?
WHERE'D SHE COME FROM, DYOU THINK?
WHO CARES?
CLANG!

GAHHH...!
YAHH!!!
THOOSH
AH-YEEEEEE!!
UNNNN...!

YOU'RE FREE. HEAD INTO THE NIGHT AND DON'T LOOK BACK.
ARNO AND SECMUN ARE DEAD-KILLED BY THIS WENCH. THAT'S WHAT!
WHAT'S THIS?
THEN KILL HER.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO DIE TRYING

TWO DOWN. HOW MANY MORE TO GO? I CAN DO THIS ALL NIGHT.
CHUK-KK
WHAT'S GOING ON? LET ME THROUGH.
WHO IS THI--?
YOU?
SHE IS ONE OF THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE ME DEAD--I'VE SEEN HER IN MY DREAMS!
AND NOW SHE COMES FOR ME IN THE NIGHT-- THE PROPHECY IS TRUE
I DON'T KNOW YOU. I CAME ONLY TO SEE WHAT KIND OF MONSTERS WOULD WIPE OUT A PEACEFUL TOWN IN ONE AFTERNOON.
BUT COME CLOSER AND YOUR PROPHECY WILL COME FATALLY TRUE.

COME, WHAT HAS A WORLD-BEATER TO FEAR FROM ONE LONE GIRL?
I NEEDN'T APPROACH YOU, ANY OF THESE MEN WOULD GLADLY BUT YOU FOR ME!
PERHAPS BUT CAN A HIRED SWORD STRIKE WITH THE SAME FIRE AS ONE WHOSE CAUSE IS PERSONAL?
SHALL WE TEST THAT?
I CAN NOT ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE--NOT KNOWING THAT YOU STEAL MY DEATH
KILL HER.
IF I INTENDED YOU DEAD, YOU'D BE DEAD.
SHRIIIPP
SHE'S GONE?

WE'LL STOP HERE TO REST AND RESUPPLY.
AND AWAIT FURTHER INSPIRATION AS TO OUR NEXT STEPS.
BE NICE IF IT WERE THAT EASY. I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR SUCH INSPIRATION FOR YEARS.
WELCOME TO THAYN, MY FRIENDS. BELIEVE IT OR NOT I HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
THOUGH HOW SHE KNEW TO COME AND WAIT HERE FOR YOU MUST HAVE BEEN BY DIVINE INTENT
YOU HAVE? FROM A DREAM, OR VISION?
ALAS NO--BY QUITE PROSAIC MEANS ACTUALLY. ANOTHER VISITOR ARRIVED TWO DAYS AGO, LOOKING FOR YOU.

I HAVE HEARD OF CRAEDON TO BE SURE, A POWERFUL AND COMPASSIONATE WIZARD. BUT YOU SPEAK OF HIM IN THE PAST TENSE...?
GRANDFATHER DIED TO SEND YOU THIS MESSAGE.
OUR SYMPATHIES, BUT KNOW HE DIED A HERO.
I AM CALLED IONA MY GRANDFATHER WAS CRAEDON.
HE KNEW OF YOUR CAUSE AND WISHED THAT YOU WOULD HAVE THIS TO AID YOU IN DEFEATING THE DARK EVIL.
you would seek the defeat of deep darkness, seek first the light at the world's highest vantage.
Answers await, and the key to balancing the darkness of death with light and life
I AM PREPARED TO DO THE VERY SAME IN HIS HONOR. I WILL SEE HIM AVENGED
THEN JOIN US
BUT WHAT IS THE WORLD'S HIGHEST? THE PEAK OF TARAQUEL? THE CRYSTAL MOUNTAINS?
NO.
THIS WORLD'S HIGHEST IS THE SCALAE LUX--LUCIEN'S LADDER!!!

hard can it be to find.

WARLANDS

VOLUME 3 DARK TIDE RISING

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DARK TIDE RISING
CHAPTER FOUR : "CITY OF THE DAMNED"

DOES IT BOTHER YOU AT ALL THAT WE NEVER EVEN WONDER WHY I GET THOSE PROPHETIC DREAMS?
NOT THE SLIGHTEST. THOSE DREAMS HAVE MADE YOU RICH..

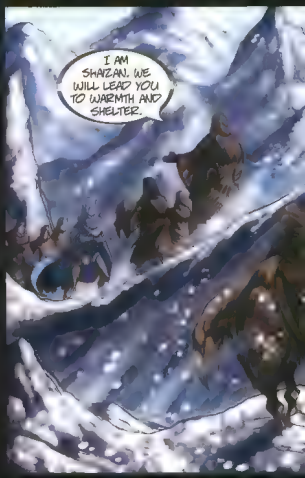
THEN WE'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. ACCORDING TO THE SCOUTS, THE LADDER IS SEVERAL DAYS NORTH.
RELAX, BALEN. THE DREAMS GIVE YOU THE ADVANTAGE. YOU CAN KILL THEM BEFORE THEY KILL YOU.
YES, KYRA. JUST THAT SIMPLE.
LORD SARGOS! WE'RE ON COURSE FOR XIAN-LI, AND FROM THERE, A SINGLE DAY TO THE PEAK.
VERY WELL, ANUK. NO HURRY THOUGH. WE'LL MAKE CAMP AT FIRST DARK.
...AND NOW THEY PROMISE TO LEAD YOU TO POWER AND GLORY!
TO EMPIRE!

WE'VE GOT TO GET TO SHELTER--!
HOW?! I CAN'T SEE MY OWN HANDS!
PUSH ON... WE WILL NOT BE FORSAKEN!
LEAD US, LIGHT- SPARE US, YOUR SERVANTS...

UNH--!
LAINA!

...SO ...COLD...
WE'VE GOT TO FIND SHELTER NOW!
SAYS BRAVE PELONIS WHO CAN'T SEE HIS OWN HAND.
CAN WE BICKER LATER, BAGGOT? THE LADY IS NEAR FROZEN!
LET'S PRAY THERE IS A LATER.
LOOK!

GREETINGS, MY FRIEND'S.
BE CALM. YOU ARE SAFE NOW.


I AM SHAZAN. WE WILL LEAD YOU TO WARMTH AND SHELTER.

IN OUR HOME-- XIAN-LI.

PRIVATE QUARTERS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR YOU ALL. I TRUST THEY WILL PROVE COMFORTABLE.
IT'S COMFORTABLE EVERYWHERE, I'LL WAGER. SO WARM.
YOU ARE WELCOME GUESTS HERE MY FRIENDS. IT IS OUR GREAT HONOR TO SERVE YOU.
WE WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING IN DUE TIME, BUT FIRST YOU WILL WANT TO REST.
YES. EVEN IN SUCH FORBIDDING SURROUNDINGS WE ENJOY A TASTE OF PARADISE.
NOW MADE MORE PLEASURABLE BY YOUR VISIT.
THIS ISN'T A HOLIDAY FOR US--WE'RE ABOUT DEADLY SERIOUS BUSINESS.
INDEED. WE ARE AWARE OF YOUR QUEST, BUT MORE ON THIS AFTER YOU ALL REST.

IN OUR OWN WAY WE FOLLOW THE SAME LIGHT AS DO YOU, LORD ZADOK. WE ALSO KNOW OF THE DARK EVIL THAT LIVES WITHIN OUR WORLD
YOU SAID YOU KNEW ABOUT US. ?
WE ARE NOT CONVINCED THIS POWER CAN BE DEFEATED. LIKE THE WEED THAT GROWS TWISTED AMONG THE WHEAT, PERHAPS IT IS TOO ENTWINED IN OUR VERY EXISTENCE.
BUT, WE ONLY SURMISE--THERE MAY WELL BE A DIFFERING OUTCOME IN THE OFFING.
WHAT YOU FIND IN YOUR QUEST WILL SHOW YOU THE TRUE WAY
WHEN YOU ARE READY, WE WILL PROVIDE SUPPLIES, MOUNTS AND A GUIDE TO TAKE YOU TO THE PEAK.
WE OF XIAN-LI WILL SOON FACE OUR OWN TRIAL.

SIR, THE TRACKER'S ESTIMATE THAT OUR QUARRY IS BUT A DAY AHEAD.
THEN SOON ALL OF THIS WILL END.
WELL, PUSH ON. WE CAN'T BE FAR FROM LUCIEN'S LADDER.
NO NEED TO DELAY WHAT MUST BE DONE.
WAIT BALEN.
CAN WE MAKE JUST ONE DETOUR?

AHEAD LIES THAREN. SCALAE LUX JUST BEYOND.
WHAT IS THAREN?
THE GATEWAY TO THE MOUNTAIN. A CITY OF THE DEAD.
OF COURSE! LEGEND SAYS THAT LUZIEN WAS LAID TO REST IN A NECROPOLIS--BEFORE THE EARTH ITSELF THRUST HIM HEAVENWARD!
YES MISTRESS, AS YOU SAY.
THERE!
IT IS SAID THAT A LONG-DEAD RACE OF GIANTS ONCE CALLED THAREN HOME.
IT IS ALSO SAID THAT THEIR MONSTROUS GHOSTS STILL HAUNT THESE STONE HALLS.

THIS IS AS FAR AS WE DO THE MOUNTS AND SUPPLIES ARE YOURS.
GOOD LUCK.
ZADOK--?
IT IS OUR QUEST, NOT THEIRS.
LET'S GET ON WITH IT--A FEW GHOSTS WON'T SLOW ME DOWN.
HELL, I DON'T EVEN BELIEVE IN GHOSTS.
WE'VE FACED VAMPIRES, DRAGONS AND SATYRS. GHOSTS DO NOT STRAIN MY IMAGINATION.
EXPECT ANYTHING.

ROOOOOOOO
I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THIS!
AHHEEEEEEEE

AND WE OF XIAN-LI STAND BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR GOAL.
OUR ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO PEACE GOES BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS... TO LUDIEN HIMSELF. WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN WARFARE.
NO LONGER ANY DOUBT. THEY ARE COMING.
ARE WE SURE THIS WILL NOT BE PEACEFUL?
THE TOWN OF SKARRSGARD WAS FLATTENED JUST FOR SPORT.
YET, IT FALLS UPON US TO DELAY THIS INEXORABLE EVIL.
WE WHO HAVE NEVER EVEN SEEN A WEAPON.
MUST FACE DOWN A VAST AND DEADLY ARMY!

PROPHECY HAS ALWAYS POINTED TO A TIME OF GREAT SACRIFICE.
IT IS THE PRICE OF OUR LONG TRANQUILITY.
THERE IS ONLY ONE COURSE WE MAY TAKE. ISOLATION IS NO LONGER AN OPTION.

AAAAARRGGGHH
IMPOSSIBLE-- THESE GHOSTS CAN BE KILLED?
THEN SHUT UP AND KILL MORE!
SCHUNK
THUNKK

AWHOOOOOOOOOO
MATEO GUERRERO
AURES

DID THE SHADOW SOUL SEND THESE THINGS?
I DOUBT IT. I SUSPECT THAT THEY ARE INTENDED MERELY TO SCARE INTRUDERS AWAY.
ONLY THE WORTHY ARE WELCOMED HERE. ONLY THE WORTHY MAY APPROACH LUCIENS PEAK.
COME. THE MOUNTAIN LIES DEAD AHEAD. THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO ASCEND THIS IMPOSSIBLE SPIRE.
NO FLYING CARPET, NO WINGED HORSE, NOT EVEN A LOUSY ROPE.
THERE'S NO WAY WE'RE CLIMBING THAT THING.

WHERE IS THAT BEAUTIFUL CITY, BALEN-- WHERE?!
I HAVE NO IDEA, MY PET. IT APPEARS THAT WE ARE LOST.
AND THE WEATHER WILL KILL ME RATHER THAN MY ENEMIES.
SIR, WE ARE NOT LOST-- OUR SCOUTS ARE SURE WE CAN FIND LUCIEN'S MOUNTAIN. EVEN THROUGH THIS DAMNED BLIZZARD!
BE CALM, FRIENDS. WE COME IN PEACE.
WE WANT NOTHING MORE THAN TO MAKE OUR HOME YOURS.
OUR PASSAGE WILL BE ARDUOUS, OF COURSE..
THERE IS NO NEED TO SUFFER, MY FRIENDS.

YOU ARE FROM THE MOUNTAIN KINGDOM WE SAW?
THE KINGDOM OF XIAN-LI, YES. IT IS OUR INTENT TO OFFER EVERYTHING THAT OUR BELOVED KINGDOM IS TO YOU AND YOUR IMPRESSIVE RETINUE.
YOU WILL GIVE US YOUR ENTIRE KINGDOM?
WE COULD JUST TAKE IT, YOU KNOW.
OF COURSE. BUT IN THAT EVENTUALITY, MANY OF MY PEACEFUL PEOPLE WOULD DIE. PERHAPS SOME OF YOURS AS WELL.
NO. OUR LIVES MATTER MORE THAN OUR POSSESSIONS. WE GIVE XIAN-LI FREELY FOR YOUR OCCUPATION.
RELYING, OF COURSE, ON YOUR HONOR THAT MY PEOPLE WILL BE SPARED.
OF COURSE.
Friend or Foe?

WE BID YOU WELCOME. XIAN-LI IS YOURS!
OH, BALEN, IT'S EXQUISITE!
THIS IS IT. THIS IS WHERE WE ARE MEANT TO BE!
IS IT? IS IT INDEED?

I DON'T KNOW HOW, BUT THIS PLACE IS THE KEY TO LUCIEN'S ..ADDER.
SOMEWHERE THERE MUST BE A WAY UP.
I CONCUR. BUT WHERE?
EXCELLENT QUESTION. I DON'T--?
OH MY...?
I BELIEVE I HAVE FOUND IT.

WONDERFUL!
IT'S LIKE BEING LIFTED ALOFT IN HUGE, LOVING HANDS!
BE ALERT--WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT AWAITS US AT THE SUMMIT!
ONLY YOU WOULD SEEK THE WORM IN THE APPLE, ZADOK.
To Be Continued.

Dreamwave Productions Presents

WARLANDS

DARK TIDE RISING

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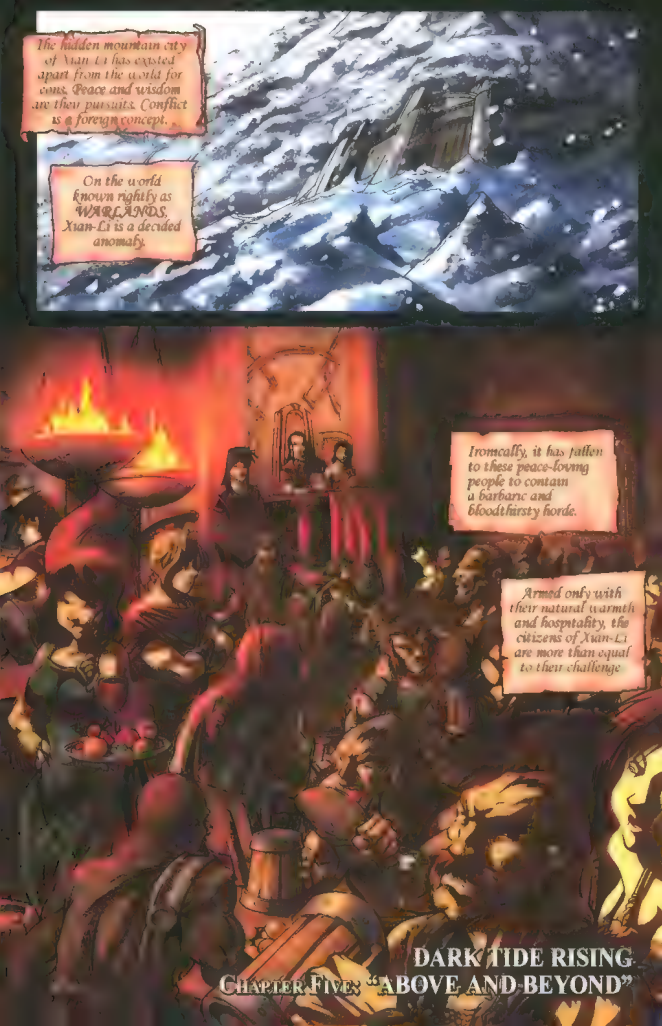

The hidden mountain city of Xian-Li has existed apart from the world for eons. Peace and wisdom are their pursuits. Conflict is a foreign concept.
On the world known rightly as WARLANDS, Xian-Li is a decided anomaly.
Ironically, it has fallen to these peace-loving people to contain a barbaric and bloodthirsty horde.
Armed only with their natural warmth and hospitality, the citizens of Xian-Li are more than equal to their challenge
DARK TIDE RISING
CHAPTER FIVE: "ABOVE AND BEYOND"

THIS IS HOW WE SHOULD ALWAYS LIVE, BALEN. THIS IS SO RIGHT!
THE MEN SEEM TO AGREE. IT'S BEEN DAYS SINCE I'VE SEEN ANY OF THEM KILL ANYTHING OUT OF SPITE.
YOU PLANNING ON GETTING US FAT AND DRUNK--AND THEN GUTTING US LIKE SHEEP, SHAZAN?
OF COURSE NOT, LORD SARGOS. MY PEOPLE HAVE NEVER OWNED WEAPONS.
WE CAN NOT FIGHT YOU, THUS WE GLADLY SURRENDER EVERYTHING WE HAVE TO YOUR PLEASURE.
YOU ARE MORE THAN GUESTS. WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS. CONSIDER THIS YOUR KINGDOM.
C'MERE, GIRL -- LET ANUK SHOW YOU SOME FUN!
NO DOUBT, YOURS IS A UNIQUE...OUTLOOK ON THE SUBJECT, LORD.
HAW HAW HAW
YEAH, YOU MIGHT SAY THAT ANUK'S OUTLOOK IS SINGULAR!
I'LL SHOW HER HOW WELL I SEE IN THE DARK!

IT ALL LOOKS SO WONDERFUL.
IF ONLY YOU AGREED BALEN. YOU LOOK AS IF YOU'RE WAITING FOR THE END.
DON'T KID YOURSELF KYRA. WE WILL PAY FOR THIS... SOMEHOW.
DAYS AGO WE WERE HOT ON THE TRAIL OF MY ENEMIES. NOW WE SIT HERE HAVING AN UNENDING PARTY.
THERE IS A BLIZZARD OUT THERE, BALEN. WE COULDN'T TRAVEL ANYWAY.
IF IT'S UNAVOIDABLE, WHY NOT ENJOY OUR DELAY?
WELL. WHAT DO YOUR PROPHETIC DREAMS TELL YOU?
I HAVEN'T HAD ONE SINCE WE ARRIVED. I SLEEP LIKE A BABY
WELL. THAT IS UNFORTUNATE.
PERHAPS YOUR ENEMIES HAVE ALREADY FROZEN IN THE STORM.
I DOUBT MY LUCK IS THAT GOOD
YOU SAY THE STORM WILL BREAK TOMORROW, SHAIZAN.
WITHOUT QUESTION, LORD SARGOS.
THEN WE'LL LEAVE IN THE MORNING. HAVE GUIDES AND SUPPLIES READY.
OF COURSE SIR.

WE'RE ON THE ROAD AGAIN TOMORROW, MEN! GET SOME REST!
I KNOW THIS IS UNCOMFORTABLE, BUT OUT THERE IS BATTLE! AND THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE SIGNED ON FOR!
WHERE IS ANUK, MY COMMANDER? THEY'LL LISTEN TO HIM.
OFF IN PURSUIT OF PLEASURE, I BELIEVE -- BUT CERTAINLY THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU...?
WELL, YES, BUT THEY ARE USED TO HIM RELAYING MY WISHES.
SLOW DOWN, WENCH... I'M IN NO MOOD FOR A CHASE.
I SN'T THE PRIZE SWEETER AFTER THE HUNT, MY PRINCE? COME, CATCH ME!
I'M TOO OLD FOR GAMES, GIRL.
GIRL--?! WHERE ARE YOU?
DAMN HER.

On a quest to destroy the dark evil that poisons their world, five heroes have come
to the end of the first part of their journey. The impossibly tall peak is called Luzien's Ladder
Said by legend to be the final resting place of an ancient hero of the Warlands, LUZIEN, the Prince of Light himself
AMAZING-- THIS SURE BEATS CLIMBING THAT SHEER STONE SPIKE!
SAYS YOU, LAINA, I LEFT MY INNARDS SOMEWHERE BELOW!
SO, YOU'RE MORE...GUTLESS THAN USUAL, BAGGOT?
ENOUGH, PELONIS.
RUFFFoo!

BY THE LIGHT--A GARDEN ON THE TOP OF THIS FIERCE MOUNTAIN?!
IT MIGHT BE A TRICK, STEP CAREFULLY, LAINA.
YOUR WOLF, FREYA, SEEMS TO LIKES THE PLACE, ZADOK.
THIS IS MAGIC OF THE HIGHEST ORDER GOOD MAGIC I THINK.
OH, YES. IT IS GOOD, IONA. IT'S WONDERFUL.
LUZIEN IS VERY NEAR
IT'S-- IT'S ALL TRUE.
WELL-- HIS TOMB IS IF THE LEGENDS SPEAK THE TRUTH
THE LEGENDS SAY THAT THE EVIL IN THE EARTH COULD NOT ABIDE LUZIEN'S GOODNESS -- EVEN WHEN HE WAS DEAD

WARM...
WE'VE FOUND IT, BUT NOW WHAT? ARE WE SUPPOSED TO ENTER THE TOMB?
I DON'T KNOW HOW WE COULD. IT SEEMS MADE OF SOLID MARBLE.
WHAT HAPPENED?! IS SHE ALL RIGHT?
SHE'S BREATHING NORMALLY. SHE MIGHT JUST BE ASLEEP.
THIS IS ALL SO OVERWHELMING. SHE MAY HAVE JUST FAINTED.

GOOD MAGIC, I PRAY
NOTHING AS SIMPLE AS THAT, I'D WAGER. THIS IS MORE MAGIC.
AS DO WE ALL.
SHE HAD TO PURSUE THIS...
YES. I WONDER WHERE IT'S TAKEN HER?
--WHERE?!

..ARE YOU WENCH? COME OUT!
NO... STAY BACK!
AHHH--!

GREEEAAAAHHH
NO, PLEASE
How many times had he heard that from one of his helpless victims?
The freebooter known as Anuk had neither the time nor wits left to count them
With his last coherent thoughts Anuk might well have realized that the beast intended him exactly as much mercy
He might even have thought to mutter some contrition for his sins. But all that came out was a
And THAT drowned out by the monster's own scream of triumph

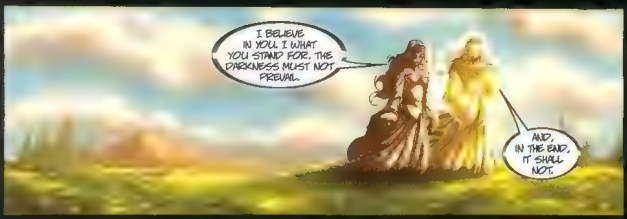
The ancient wisdom says that you will die as you have lived
Yet, could ANYONE have lived this BADLY?

WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
POOR FELLOW.
PERHAPS WE DO HAVE THE MEANS OF FIGHTING THE ENEMY AFTER ALL.

I MUST BE IN PARADISE ITSELF.
I SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT MY POSSIBLE DEMISE... BUT I AM NOT.
BUT WHY AM I HERE?
LAINA--!
LUZIEN.

BY THE LIGHT, I AM NOT WORTHY.
OF COURSE YOU ARE, LANA. PLEASE STAND...

I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
AND YET IT IS TRUE, DEAR ONE.
I MUST SAY THAT YOU HAVE COME THROUGH MUCH ON MY ACCOUNT. I THANK YOU.


I BELIEVE IN YOU. I WHAT YOU STAND FOR. THE DARKNESS MUST NOT PREVAIL.
AND, IN THE END, IT SHALL NOT.

UNTIL THEN, THOUGH, MUCH PAIN MUST STILL BE ENDURED.

BUT WE NEED PEACE NOW!!
THAT CAN BE ACHIEVED, BUT YOU MUST DEFINE YOUR GOAL MORE SPECIFICALLY.

THEN OUR GOAL MUST BE TO UTTERLY OBLITERATE THE SHADOW! SOUL IT POISONS OUR WORLD AND CORRUPTS ALL WHO LIVE UPON IT. WE WILL NEVER HAVE HARMONY WHILE IT YET LIVES!
THAT MISBEGOTTEN SPIRIT IS INDEED A BLIGHT ON ALL WHO LIVE. IT WOULD CERTAINLY MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO END ITS HATEFUL EXISTENCE
ALAS, THAT IS COMPLETELY IMPOSSIBLE. IT MUST NOT COME TO BE.

WELL, NOW I KNOW WHY YOU HAVE SO LONG RESISTED GREATNESS, BALEN --YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF ENJOYING ITS TRAPPINGS.
ENOUGH KYRA.
I HAVEN'T SEEN ANUK FOR HOURS. IF WE'RE TO LEAVE ON THE MORROW, I NEED HIM TO READY THE TROOPS.
THEN REST NO MORE MY LOVE -- HERE IS THE ONE-EYED WONDER NOW.
MY LIEGE.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU, ANUK!
MY APOLOGIES, LORD SARGOS. WHAT DO YOU WISH?
THE WEATHER WILL BREAK TOMORROW. WE MARCH OUT AT FIRST LIGHT.
I KNOW THE MEN HAVE BEEN INDULGING THEMSELVES THESE PAST DAYS, BUT I EXPECT THE TROOPS SHARP AND READY.
THE ENEMY IS STILL WITHIN REACH. WE MUST END THEIR THREAT NOW!
YES SIR

ALERT THEM TONIGHT. THEY'D BEST REST WHILE THEY CAN!
OF COURSE, LORD SARGOS. I WILL SEE TO IT. GOOD NIGHT, SIR

Somewhere the Shadow of DEATH itself stirs in inchoate rage

In explosive rage that tears at the very foundations of a world

OTHERNESS, does the malevolent force sense a coming end?

Or is this but the petulant tantrum of a ethereal infant?

...WE CAN'T DESTROY THE EVIL THAT HOLDS THIS WORLD HOSTAGE?! WHY NOT?
CALM YOURSELF, LAINA. THE TRUTH IS COMPLEX, BUT INESCAPABLE -- THINGS MUST BE AS THEY ARE ORDAINED.
I...I CAN NOT ACCEPT THAT WE MUST ABIDE SUCH A TERRIBLE EVIL...
EVEN I DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS FOUL THING CAME FROM, BUT IT IS HERE.
LIKE A CANCER, IT HAS INSINUATED ITSELF INTO THE VERY FABRIC OF THE PLANET'S BEING.
IT HAS WORMED ITS WAY INTO OUR WORKS! IT CANNOT BE REMOVED WITHOUT DESTROYING THE HOST AS WELL.
AND, IT'S POWER IS IMMENSE!
MORE POWERFUL THAN I. IT KILLED ME ALL THOSE YEARS AGO--I COULD NOT STOP IT.

THEN IT WILL KILL US TOO.
IT IS NOT HOPELESS. WE MERELY NEED TO SEE THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE AND RESPOND TO THAT REALITY.
THIS EVIL CAN BE RESISTED. IT CAN BE DIMINISHED OVER TIME EVEN IF IT CANNOT BE RIPPED FROM US IMMEDIATELY.
TELL ME WHAT WE MUST DO?
EVERYTHING IS BALANCE, MY DEAR. DAY AND NIGHT, HOT AND COLD, JOY AND SORROW. THE DARKNESS EXISTS, BUT IT IS OFFSET--DEFINED, IN FACT--BY THE LIGHT.
ULTIMATELY, IT IS THE LIGHT THAT WILL WIN OUT, BUT ONLY BY MAINTAINING THE RIGHTFUL BALANCE.
THIS EVIL MUST BE RESISTED AT ALL TIMES--IT MUST BE BALANCED BY THE GOOD YOU WILL SPREAD.
IN THIS WAY YOU WILL KILL IT A BIT AT A TIME.

SEEK TO ACHIEVE WHAT CAN BE ACHIEVED. TEACH BALANCE. LEGGE THE BEST OF PEOPLE, AND YOU WILL TRIUMPH..
IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO RETURN.
KNOW THAT YOU WILL NEVER BE POWERLESS OR ALONE..
"...the light is with you always."

ANA, YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?
I AM AND BETTER.
HOW FARED YOUR VISION QUEST?
YOU KNEW?
I SUSPECTED. YOU SAW. HIM--?
WHAT ARE YOU TWO TALKING ABOUT?
LUZIEN. I SAW HIM. SPOKE WITH HIM. HE GAVE ME THE SECRET OF DEFEATING THE SHADOW SOUL.
WE--ALL OF US--MUST BALANCE. IT'S DARKNESS WITH LIGHT. WE MUST COUNTER IT AT EVERY TURN AND SPREAD PEACE.
I AM A WARRIOR. BALANCE IS AN ODD CONCEPT. BUT I AM ALSO A PRIEST OF THE LIGHT--I DO SEE THE RIGHTNESS OF THIS.

FOR ALL OF THAT, I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO IMPLIMENT IT.
YEAH, CAN YOU GET BALANCE AND STILL HIT SOMETHING?
WE HAVE TO HEAD BACK NOW.
SO. WE JUST JUMP AND HOPE WE'LL BE OKAY.
NO. JUMP AND KNOW. THE LIGHT WILL BE THERE.

THERE THEY ARE! KILL THEM!
To Be Continued.

Dreamwave Produc

WARLANDS

DARK TIDE RISING

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WARLANDS
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THERE THEY ARE! KILL THEM!
At the base of the legendary Luzien's Ladder, the tallest point on the world known as Warlands...
One group had been seeking the end of the dark corruption that has poisoned the planet since the dawn of history
The other, LARGER, group serves the darkness and has other plans...

The small band had followed the elf-scholar, Laina, in search of the secrets of peace for their homeworld. The trail led to a legendary sage's tomb.

She found secrets and answers aplenty, but again, such an overwhelming enemy force peaceful philosophy isn't likely to impress.

But for Laina, PEACE is all she has.

NO . ?

STOP!

WE WILL NEVER TRANSFORM THIS BLIGHTED WORLD IF WE RESORT TO VIOLENCE! THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS! TRUST ME, BAGGOT.

ARE YOU MAD, LAINA?! THEY'LL JUST KILL US MORE QUICKLY!

THEN I WILL DIE AT PEACE.

NAH. YOU'RE GONNA DIE IN PIECES --HAW!

NO..?
STOP!
WE WILL NEVER TRANSFORM THIS BLIGHTED WORLD IF WE RESORT TO VIOLENCE! THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS! TRUST ME, BAGGOT.
ARE YOU MAD, LANA? THEY'LL JUST KILL US MORE QUICKLY!
THEN I WILL DIE AT PEACE.
NAH YOU'RE GONNA DIE IN PIECES --HAW!

DO WHAT YOU WILL.
IF YOU CAN.
FRIGGA'S NAME--?!
KILL HER!!
SHE'S JUST STANDING THERE. YOU CAN'T KILL SOMEONE WHO JUST STANDS THERE...
SURE WE CAN. JUST NOT HER.
...ANA'S RIGHT. DO AS SHE DOES.
WHAT IF SHE'S THE ONLY ONE THIS WORKS FOR, ZADOK?
JUST DO IT, PELONIS.
DAMN

THESE ARE HELPLESS, OUTNUMBERED LUNATICS. WHAT COULD BE EASIER THAN KILLING THEM?
WHAT KIND OF MURDEROUS HORDE ARE YOU?
WHERE IS ANUK? HE, CERTAINLY, WILL KILL THESE BUMPKINS! HE FOLLOWS MY ORDERS!
I AM HERE, LORD SARGOS.
AH. I KNEW I COULD COUNT ON YOU ANUK! KILL THE CAPTIVES, NOW!
ANUK!
OF COURSE, SIR.

Not far away, the kingdom of Xian-La gleams warmly against the cold, winter-shrouded mountains...
EXCELLENT
MASTER SHAZAN, THE GARDENERS REPORT THAT THE BODY OF THE OUTSIDER KNOWN AS ANUK HAS BEEN DISPOSED OF.
VERY GOOD, NALA. THANK YOU.
HIS FRIENDS ARE ABOUT TO DISCOVER OUR LITTLE... SUBSTITUTION. IT SHOULD PROVE A...TURNING POINT IN THIS DRAMA.
OUR GOOD FRIEND BALEN SARGOS IS IN FOR A SURPRISE.

WHAT HAVE YOU MONSTERS DONE TO BALEN?! WHERE IS HE?!!
CALM YOURSELF, LADY KYRA. HE WILL BE FINE.
DON'T LIE TO ME! YOU'VE DONE SOMETHING TO HIM! YOU'RE GOING TO KILL HIM!
I ASSURE YOU WE ARE NOT. HE WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU SOON.
HIS FOLLOWERS MAY NOT BE SO FORTUNATE.
YOU SAID YOU WERE GIVING US YOUR KINGDOM IN PEACE. BUT IT WAS ALL A TRICK!
YOU JUST WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR TRUST.
WELL.. YES, THIS IS TRUE... BUT IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. AND BALEN'S..
HE HAS BEEN ILL-USED BY A POWERFUL, DARK FORCE. THE VERY EVIL THAT HAS CORRUPTED OUR WORLD.
HE WAS... USED. ?
YES. HE HAS DREAMS, DOES HE NOT? PROPHETIC VISIONS?
...!

THIS DARK FORCE, THE SHADOW SOUL, SPEAKS THROUGH DREAMS.
LORD SARGOS HAS BEEN MANIPULATED.. AS HAVE MANY OTHERS OVER THE EONS.
NO NO NO
NO!
BALEN IS A GREAT MAN! A BORN LEADER! NO ONE DECEIVES HIM!
IT'S ALL A LIE!!!!
REST, MY LADY.
AAAAAHHHHHHH..
VERY GOOD, THANK YOU... TAKE THE LADY TO THE ROYAL CHAMBER. SEE TO IT THAT SHE IS COMFORTABLE AND.. CONTAINED.

WE ARE MORE FORTUNATE THAN WE WILL EVER KNOW. FROM OUR VANTAGE, THIS WORLD IS ONE OF HEART-RENDING BEAUTY.
EVERYONE ELSE, ALAS, HAS SEEN LITTLE MORE THAN UNIMAGINABLE HORROR.
SUFFERING, PAIN, OPPRESSION, HATRED. THEY HAVE LIVED IN CONFLICT FOR UNTOLD CENTURIES.
IF THE PROPHESIES ARE TRUE, THAT WILL SOON CHANGE.
THEY MUST COME TRUE.

THPPP
I GAVE YOU AN ORDER! HOW DARE YOU DEFY ME?!
ANSWER ME!
ANUK?! YOU BETRAY ME TOO?!

WHAT IN HELL...?

ROAR
ROAR

YOU! THIS IS YOUR DOING!
WELL, I WON'T STAND STILL AND BE KILLED!
BUT AS YOU KNOW, I WILL. DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO.

YOU DID NOTHING...BUT I AM THE ONE BEATEN...
...HOW?
A NEW WAY...A REJECTION OF THE CONFLICT THAT RULES THIS WORLD.
A LIGHT TO BALANCE THE DARKNESS THAT HOLDS US HOSTAGE.
I SEE THAT EVERYTHING HAS WORKED ITSELF OUT. THANK THE LIGHT.
A YOUNG WOMAN BACK IN XIAN-LI WILL BE GLAD TO KNOW THAT MASTER SARGOS HAS SURVIVED.
YOU KNEW ALL THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?
MUCH OF IT, YES. WE HAVE BEEN WAITING A LONG TIME FOR THESE EVENTS.

THE KINGDOM OF XIAN-LI WAS ESTABLISHED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, CREATED TO PROTECT LUZIEN'S LADDER.
WE HAVE LIVED APART, SERVING THE LIGHT AND KEEPING THE MEMORY OF LUZIEN ALIVE.
NOW YOU ARE PART OF THAT MISSION.
THESE EVENTS ARE A SIGNAL THAT TIMES ARE ABOUT TO CHANGE.
TOGETHER WE WILL CARRY THIS MESSAGE TO A SUFFERING WORLD.
FIRST, HOWEVER, THE SHADOW SOUL MUST HEAR A MESSAGE OF ITS OWN.
NOW IS THE TIME!

CHOOM

ZZZZT!
FRROOMM
SIZZLE

FWOOSH

FWOOM!
ROAR!

It has no substance, but it feels the tremendous agony of the fire's consuming power. The thin air fills with the stench of scorched ozone.
It has no ability to scream, but an entire world reverberates with the thundering rageof this thwarted dark spirit.
It will not be destroyed, merely chastised by this encounter. The global balance between dark and light must be established forcefully.

And, though the battle for supremacy will go on for years, the Shadow Soul finally understands that it WILL be opposed.
The battle for a world's heart has finally been joined.
And PEACE will be hard sought.
MUCH EFFORT AND STRUGGLE LIES YET AHEAD OF US, BUT THANKS TO THESE GOOD PEOPLE, OUR MISSION IS LAUNCHED IN TRIUMPH!
IN A WORLD WHERE THE FIST AND SWORD ARE THE FIRST RESPONSE TO ANY ENCOUNTER, WE MUST CHANGE THESE DEADLY HABITS!
WE MUST LEARN TO SPREAD BALANCE!
WE MUST INVERT AND SUBVERT THE DARK NATURE THAT RULES US. WE MUST FIGHT WITHOUT VIOLENCE, SPEAK PEACE WHERE WAR WOULD BLOOM!
DEATH IS DIMINISHED. LIFE MUST BE PROTECTED!

WE WILL TAKE BACK OUR HOME!
"The prophesies say that an age of ICE will descend on our world soon--but this too is part of the purification we must endure..."
"Peace will come. The LIGHT will prevail!"
The End.